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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FWS USES POWER BARGE FOR LIGHT PLANE BASE

An Alaskan experiment operating a cub-type plane from a mobile vessel has been completed and the results are being evaluated, Acting Secretary Clarence A. Davis said today. The purpose of the experiment was to determine how a small plane could best be adapted to supplement the larger planes in the Fish and Wildlife Service program in the Far North.

The experiment was conducted by the Branch of Alaska Fisheries using a Branch of Predator and Rodent Control plane. One of the Fishery Branch vessels, a power scow, was rigged with hoisting equipment to take the plane to and from the water. Space for carrying the plane and for necessary supplies was provided. A pontoon equipped plane was used.

Participants in the experiment say that once the work started it was evident that other uses besides patrol and stream guard operations would develop. In general the plan provides closer liaison between the vessel and plane and greatly extends coverage. The ship can serve as a supply base from which the small craft can shuttle on service missions to ground crews or on patrol and observation missions over land and sea, Mr. Davis observed.

Those who took part in the project point out that the use of a small plane based on a nearby ship augments present air practice by affording more frequent contact with stream guards and others, and this leads to better morale, closer supervision and more efficiency. The participants also say that the plan makes the delivery of mail and supplies easier and that in many instances a 15-minute flight has saved a whole day's travel by boat. They point to more efficient operation of equipment in the field because repairs can be made more easily.

Fish counts from the small plane tallied closely with counts made on the ground at the same time, and the closer supervision possible helped stream guards handle what might have become serious enforcement problems.

With many thousands of miles of coastline to patrol in Alaska and with isolated camps to supply, planes are essential to efficient operations. Heavier amphibious planes are required for over water flights, the movement of freight and supplies in volume, and during heavy weather often encountered. This experiment has indicated however, that light planes aboard some of the larger vessels provides an economical means of augmenting field operations.

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